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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SSM-03 /074 W
----------012813 261151Z /16
O 261115Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 3460
AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE
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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV NIACT IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EG IS XF
SUBJECT: SADAT-BEGIN PRESS CONFERENCE

1. ASSUME DEPARTMENT HAS ALREADY RECEIVED FULL TEXT OF SADAT-BEGIN 50 MINUTE PRESS CONFERENCE AT ISMAILIA DEC 26. BOTH SADAT AND BEGIN WERE ANXIOUS TO CONVEY IMPRESSION OF SUCCESS, BUT THEIR APPARENT FAILURE TO AGREE ON "STATE-MENT OF PRINCIPLES" AND THEIR GENERAL RESPONSES TO MANY PROBING QUESTIONS WILL CREATE DOUBTS. FOLLOWING ARE POINTS OF PARTICULAR INTEREST AND OUR INITIAL ASSESSMENT.

2. MODALITIES OF NEGOTIATIONS. SUMMIT ESTABLISHED A
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POLITICAL COMMITTEE TO MEET IN JERUSALEM AT FOREIGN MINISTER LEVEL AND A MILITARY COMMITTEE TO MEET IN CAIRO AT MINISTER OF DEFENSE LEVEL. THESE COMMITTEES WILL START WORK THE FIRST WEEK OF JANUARY AND REPORT TO PLENARY OF CAIRO CONFERENCE WHEN THEY REACH DECISIONS. CAIRO CONFERENCE WILL BE IMMEDIATELY UPGRADED TO "MINIS-TERIAL LEVEL". U.S. AND UN WILL BE INVITED TO PARTICI-

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PATE IN NEW POLITICAL COMMITTEE BUT MILITARY COMMITTEE
WILL BE BILATERAL. ALTHOUGH NOT EXPLICITLY STATED, OUR
UNDERSTANDING FROM PREVIOUS STATEMENTS IS THAT WITH RAIS-
ING OF CAIRO CONFERENCE TO MINISTERIAL LEVEL, NEW INVITA-
TIONS TO ABSENT PARTIES WILL BE ISSUED. SADAT AND BEGIN
WILL HOLD ANOTHER SUMMIT WHEN AND IF NECESSARY.

3. PROGRESS ACHIEVED. IN OPENING STATEMENT, SADAT SAID
PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE ON WITHDRAWAL AND OTHER POINTS, BUT
ON PALESTINIAN ISSUE -- THE "CRUX OF THE PROBLEM" -- EGYPT
HAD STATED ITS POSITION THAT WEST BANK AND GAZA SHOULD
FORM A PALESTINIAN STATE AND ISRAEL HAD STATED ITS POSITION
THAT PALESTINIAN ARABS IN "JUDEA, SAMARIA AND GAZA" SHOULD
ENJOY "SELF-RULE". THESE DIFFERENCES ARE TO BE DISCUSSED
IN THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE. BEGIN DECLARED SUMMIT
"SUCCESSFUL" AND SAID SERIOUS DETAILED NEGOTIATIONS WILL
NOW BEGIN. BOTH SADAT AND BEGIN REPEATEDLY STRESSED THEY
ARE WORKING FOR COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT AND RULED OUT
INTERIM OR BILATERAL AGREEMENT.

4. BEGIN PROPOSALS. SADAT REFUSED TO CHARACTERIZE
BEGIN'S PROPOSAL OTHER THAN THERE HAD BEEN POINTS OF
AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT. BEGIN SAID THEY WERE SAME AS
PRESENTED TO PRESIDENT CARTER WITH UNIMPORTANT AMENDMENTS.
EGYPT WILL PRESENT COUNTERPROPOSALS IN COMMITTEES. SADAT
DOES NOT THINK THERE IS "ANY GAP THAT CANNOT BE BRIDGED."
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5. PARTICIPATION OF PLO. SADAT SAID PLO IS NOW IN
REJECTIONIST CAMP. NEVERTHELESS, HE HAD SENT PLO
INVITATION TO CAIRO CONFERENCE. IT IS PLO WHICH
HAS EXCLUDED ITSELF. HE HOPED NEGOTIATIONS WOULD CREATE
A NEW SITUATION. BEGIN, HOWEVER, RULED OUT PARTICIPATION
OF PLO SINCE IT ADVOCATES DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL. HOWEVER,
HE SAID ISRAEL WANTS TO NEGOTIATE WITH PALESTINIAN ARABS
AND WILL "DO SO FIRST WEEK OF JANUARY". (COMMENT.
THERE WAS NO FOLLOW-UP TO THIS ANSWER, BUT IT MAY BE
SOME PALESTINIANS ARE TO BE INVITED TO ATTEND POLITICAL
COMMITTEE MEETING IN JERUSALEM.)

6. WITHDRAWAL. IN LAST QUESTION OF CONFERENCE BEGIN SAID
ISRAEL ACCEPTS PRINCIPLE OF NON-ACQUISITION OF TERRITORY
BY FORCE IN WAKE OF WAR OF AGGRESSION. HOWEVER, 1967 WAS
FOR ISRAEL WAR OF SELF-DEFENSE. HE REVEALED SADAT HAD
ACKNOWLEDGED TO HIM PREVIOUS DAY THAT ISRAEL HAD IN FACT
BEEN THREATENED. UNDER RESOLUTION 242 ISRAEL IS NOT
BOUND TO TOTAL WITHDRAWAL. SECURE AND RECOGNIZED BORDERS
IS ONE OF MAIN SUBJECTS OF NEGOTIATIONS.

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7. COMMENT. CLEARLY, BOTH PRINCIPALS, WHILE THEY COULD NOT CONCEAL THAT MAJOR DIFFERENCES STILL EXIST, SOUGHT PROJECT IMAGE OF A SUCCESSFUL MEETING AND STRESSED NEGOTIATIONS AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL WILL CONTINUE NEGOTIATING PROCESS. FOR BEGIN ISMAILIA MEETING WOULD SEEM TO HAVE BEEN A SUCCESS; FOR SADAT, IT WOULD ON THE SURFACE AT LEAST APPEAR TO BE LESS SO. WHILE BOTH PRINCIPALS STUDIOUSLY AVOIDED REVEALING DETAILS, SADAT SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN UNABLE MODIFY APPRECIABLY ANY SIGNIFICANT ELEMENT OF

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
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O 261115Z DEC 77
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BEGIN PLAN, WHICH HAD ALREADY BEEN PUBLICIZED BEFORE PRIMIN'S ARRIVAL. SADAT GOT LESS THAN THE "DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES" WHICH HE SAID HE NEEDED, BUT SEEMS TO HAVE MADE THE BEST OF THIS. IN A SENSE, HE HAD TO DO SO OR ADMIT THAT HIS POLICY HAD FAILED. SADAT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE CRITICIZED BY REJECTIONIST ARABS AND PERHAPS EVEN MODERATE ARABS FOR APPARENTLY HAVING GOTTEN LITTLE FOR THE PALESTINIANS IN HIS TALKS. THERE WILL ALSO BE SOME DISILLUSIONMENT AT HOME AND HE WILL HAVE A PROBLEM KEEPING UP THE MORALE OF HIS SUPPORTERS AS EGYPT AND

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ISRAEL ENTER DETAILED NEGOTIATIONS. BOTH HERE AND IN
THE ARAB WORLD THERE WILL BE RAISED EYEBROWS AT BEGIN'S
REVELATION OF SADAT'S ADMISSION THAT ISRAEL WAS IN FACT
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THREATENED BY THE ARABS IN 1967. THESE ARE PRELIMINARY
IMPRESSIONS AND WE HOPE IN NEXT FEW DAYS OBTAIN WIDEST
POSSIBLE SAMPLING OF EGYPTIAN REACTION. EILTS

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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